

# SEX AND THE BLACK MACHINE

BRIAN ALDISS



An **AVERNUS** Original



SPUTNIK III (USSR),  
15.5.1958, 2,295 lb.  
Space laboratory



DISCOVERER I (USA),  
28.2.1959, 8,300 lb. First  
attempt at recovery from  
orbit.



VANGUARD III (USA),  
18.9.1959, 100 lb. Measure-  
ment of conditions in  
space.



TRANSIT 1B (USA),  
13.6.1960, 265 lb. First  
for navigation problems.

BRIAN ALDISS made this book on Friday, 3rd June 1988,  
a wet day, in his home in Oxfordshire. The chief  
implements used were an Olivetti ET121, UHU, a pair  
of his grandfather's scissors, and an Olympia UTAX  
C-116 photocopier.

The illustrations come from various  
non-copyright sources.

The book is designed to amuse readers of  
INTERZONE

Limited Edition

Overall supervision: Frank Hatherley  
AVERNUS CREATIVE MEDIA



EXPLORER IV (USA),  
26.7.1958, 38.4 lb.



PIONEER IV (USA),  
3.3.1959, 13.4 lb. In  
solar orbit



LUNIK III (USSR),  
4.10.1959, 4,807 lb.  
First photographs of  
the other face of  
the moon.



DISCOVERER XI (USA),  
15.6.1960, 3,200 lb.



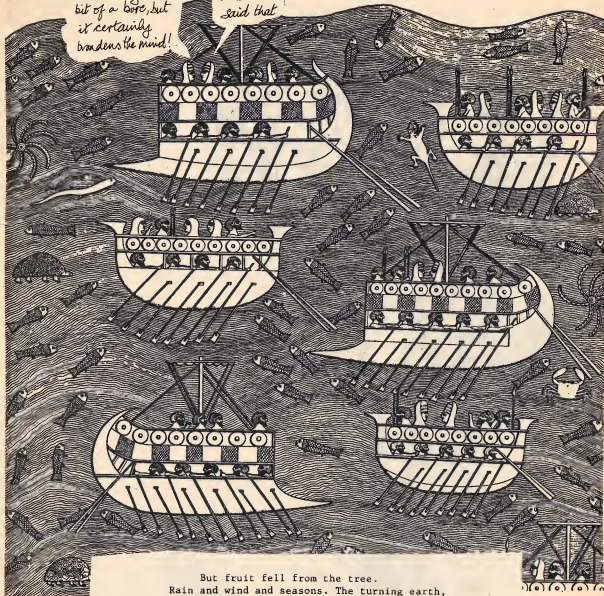


Time lost  
Time was  
when all sentient beings  
grew on the same world-tree

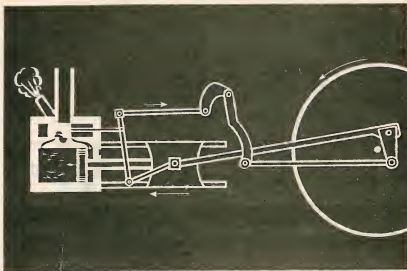


Travel may be a  
bit of a bore, but  
it certainly  
broadens the mind!

I wish I'd  
said that



But fruit fell from the tree.  
Rain and wind and seasons. The turning earth,  
the gravid sun.  
To have two legs and ten toes instead of roots...  
forgotten times lie in the soil of consciousness.  
From that rootlessness came the divorce from  
nature and the desire to travel.  
And travel did something to the minds of early  
humankind:  
A machinery of thought came into being.



After hundreds and thousands of years, people still did not understand each other. They were mysteries even to themselves. Something inscrutable clogged the relationships between people, and between the sexes. The gift of speech complicated matters rather than simplifying them. It was hailed at first as the greatest invention in the history of the world; its inventor was first made god-king and then stoned to death.

Hands told most. Faces told little. Words lied.

The time would come when someone would have to phone Freud.

"I would like to speak to Herr Doktor Freud, please. I am convinced that my soul is in China."

The uprooting had created a malign growth in the skull. Words have their house only in the cerebrum, that part of the brain which makes men and women human. The mysterious world of understanding occupies all of the brain, and the nervous system beyond the brain, and the blood cells and body beyond that. And the past, guarded by the genes. Sex reaches down into the soil once more.

But there was a Black Machine in there, threatening, isolating...



Here's Augustina, born one late summer's day in a year called 4018. In those prehistoric times, many were the legends told of her. Her beauty and her ugliness, her cleverness and her stupidity, these were the stuff of stories. In the evening, the sun went down across the market squares where the storytellers spoke, as if it too would bathe in Augustina.

Lies are inserted into stories to prop up the truth of them. Poor truth, that sickly plant!





Augustina's faithful bactrian camel had no machine in its skull. She ventured alone with the animal to the lands of Zoncas Novas. There is a legend that Ymirt, the dinosaur archbishop who rules half the known world, had decreed that silence should prevail over Zoncas Novas and no word be spoken there. Even the herds of yak and sheep were mute.

Augustina thought her thoughts. At night she slept alone and dreamed. One day, she learned to make a music by clapping her hands in her moist armpits and between her breasts, thereby breaking the archbishop's decree of silence. But that mammary music, basis of all present-day rhythms, may still be heard in northern latitudes.

One of her dreams brought to Augustina a realisation of the power of the Black machine.



The machine would create despair in the future, and despair would pile on despair. Good would remain a dream. People would starve, houses would burn, tyrants would reign. Enmity between the sexes would thrive.

As grass grew, as the rivers flowed, the drive towards destruction continued. The great world's surpassing beauty found an echo within the skulls of some; but its reality lay beyond the all-devouring skull.

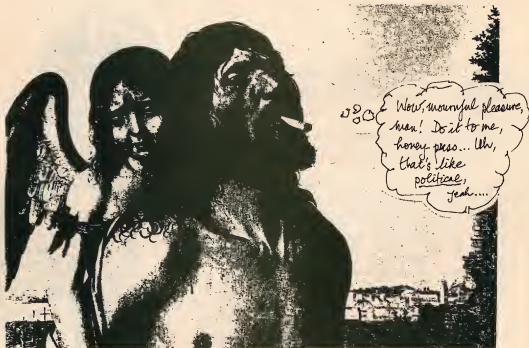
When Augustina came to Fel-Leffin, she lay in carnal embrace with three young men in one night. So say the storytellers. With plentiful gesture they tell her tale in the bazaar.

Wow, like  
do it to me,  
honey puss...





"Such a merciless blow had destroyed her that her countenance



was obliterated. It was hard to believe that she had ever lived. The theoreticians carried me fainting from the room."

"Oh, that I did not look on death!"

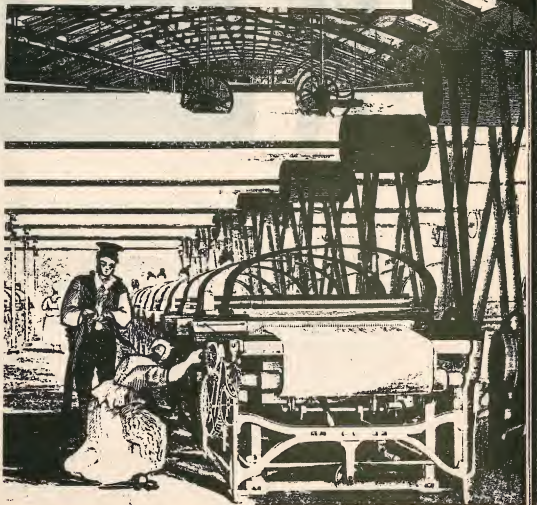
"Oh, that you had not looked on life..."

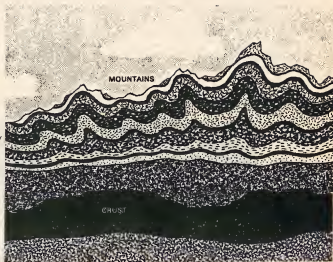
The maggots went about their private business in the apples in the orchard.

A new despotism developed which had its source in the vast number of people who crowded into the factories to sell their services for a pittance. What comfort they found in those bleak halls! What satisfaction in a few simple movements indefinitely repeated! What profundity in the passage of days commanded by the whistle, the gong, the hooter.

The spread of privacy within the home gave rise to a new code of sexual manners, embroidering the preliminaries of sexual intercourse, and tending to lengthen the period of amatory activity for both sexes. That which women had once flaunted openly as their most cherished possession now became private and was concealed, not only under voluminous skirts, but with one of the new inventions of the factories: bloomers, knickers.

Soon the cities, once open to the sun, also developed private parts. Hidden courts, velvet rooms, curtains. The Machine roared.





"I am the Archbishop Ymirt. My world is cold and slow, and the tepid sun dallies in its eternal arc. The raindrops form overhead with no greater speed than a snowdrop emerging from the chill winter earth. I banish you and your kind to the far North, where the rivers flow back on themselves, choked with their own throat's ice."

"You taste an obsolete reality in your skull. Though you may prowl the desert, you are still a fish, my lord. There are scales itching beneath your skin. Whereas in my skull, worlds blaze, fore-skins peel back, the linnets sing, and babies burst forth from their bronze wombs. My world-vision conquers yours as the sun vanquishes ice."

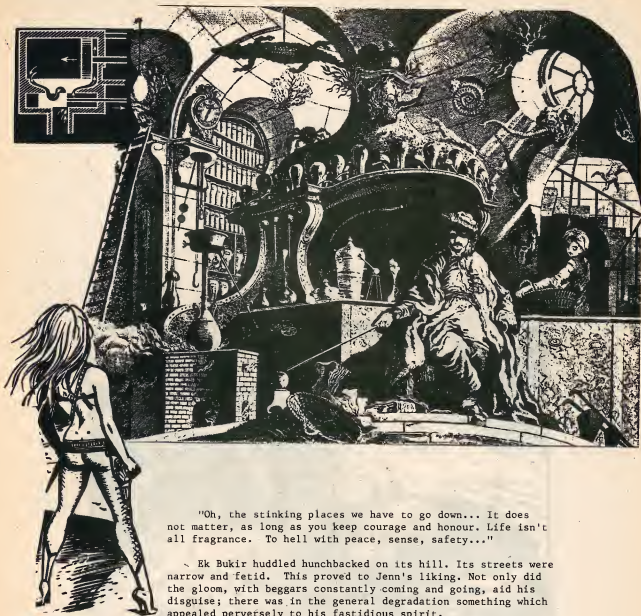
She fell silent, perceiving that human skulls held a whole multitude of realities, to each its little kingdom. Elbow brushed against elbow on the way to market, yet stranger would not converse with stranger.

Henceforth, she and Jenn were outlaws.

The Bactrian said, "Earth receives rain greedily down its parched June throat."

The words came from it heavy, curdled, without elegance. They fed it hay before she mounted and swung the creature's head towards an unknown city.



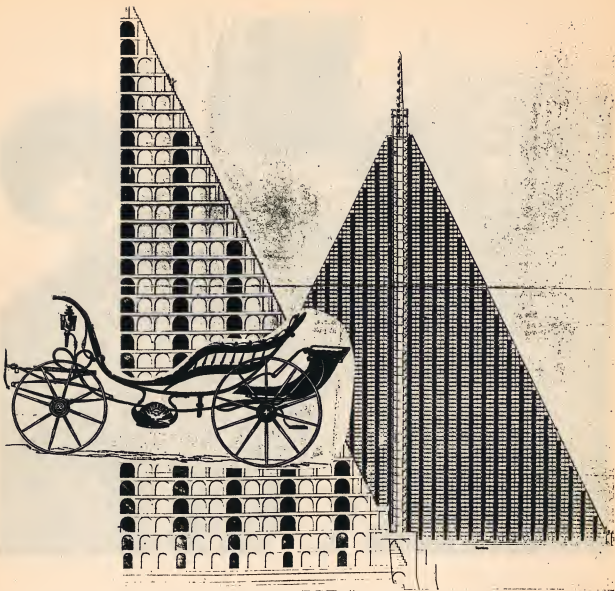


"Oh, the stinking places we have to go down... It does not matter, as long as you keep courage and honour. Life isn't all fragrance. To hell with peace, sense, safety..."

Ek Bukir huddled hunchbacked on its hill. Its streets were narrow and fetid. This proved to Jenn's liking. Not only did the gloom, with beggars constantly coming and going, aid his disguise; there was in the general degradation something which appealed perversely to his fastidious spirit.

"Spare a coin, master. The leg I lost in the recent wars. My old woman ran off with a tailor. I'm going blind. My brother is more than mad..."

Generations passed. The cries remained, staining the air. Preachers of every hue spoke out against the sins of the flesh: yet still, tidally, tribally, mouth opened to mouth, desire sucked against desire.



Augustina sent the cleverest of her sisters to the dinosaur archbishop. This fair young woman designed for the tyrant a dainty carriage with a resemblance to a human female's sexual organ.

The archbishop became filled with a sluggish lust for human beauty. He took the young woman to his cold palace, designed from the bones and architraves of extinct species. Great doors clanged shut behind the pair. Those doors, luxurious, lugubrious, were not to open again for twenty years.

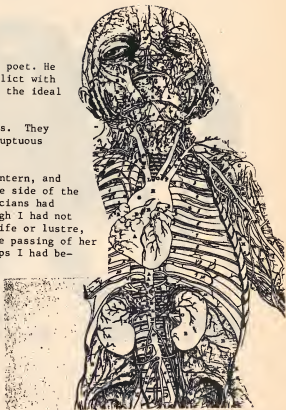
Love in the brains of ichthyosaurs grinds onward like a dilatory glacier.



One of the young men, the jengha-smoker, was a poet. He saw how many images of love there were, some in conflict with others, as the ideal of love unfettered clashed with the ideal of domestic love.

Such confusions destroyed character and happiness. They emanated from the Black Machine. Under the rich voluptuous mosaics lay crumbling plaster, shoddily applied.

"They led the way into a chamber lit by a dim lantern, and there pointed to a great wooden chest standing to one side of the place. Going forward, I saw that the cruel theoreticians had deprived me of my last sorrowful consolation. Although I had not expected to find in her beloved visage any sign of life or lustre, such as had once delighted me, for they faded with the passing of her spirit, I had hoped to print a last kiss on those lips I had betrayed. This mournful pleasure was denied me.



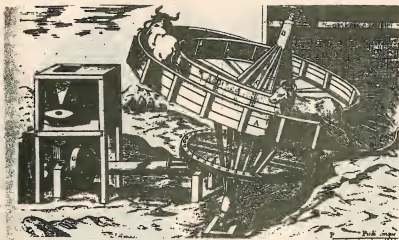


No obelisks were raised, no workmen employed. No horses were bred. The army was not paid. The fields were not irrigated, the poor were not fed.

As long as there are Black Machines, tyrants have their place.

Wars came. famine broke out, followed by pestilence, that greedy lodger who feeds on famine; people who had once flocked to the city fled from it, crying. No shame was attached to dying by the wayside; it was a proof of humanity.

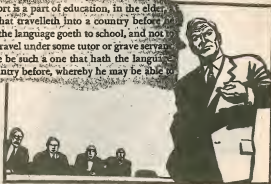
"The wayside?" asked the Bactrian, puzzled. "What else is there but the wayside?"

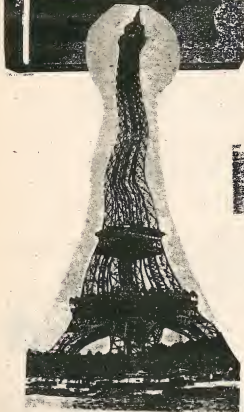


Those she knew and loved died where they fell. She took no more lovers. Fear induces celibacy. Once more she travelled. Where others moved in circles, tethered by habit or lust, Augustina's path was that of the arrow.

There is wisdom in solitude. The kingdom of heaven is within us. So is the principality of hell. To imagine that these places are actual and external are fallacious. But suppose that enough pressure built up in the skull to expell physically that Black Machine...

TRAVEL in the younger sort is a part of education, in the elder, part of experience. He that travelleth into a country before he hath some entrance into the language goeth to school, and not to travel. That young men travel under some tutor or grave servant, I allow; well, so\* that he be such a one that hath the language, and hath been in the country before, whereby he may be able to

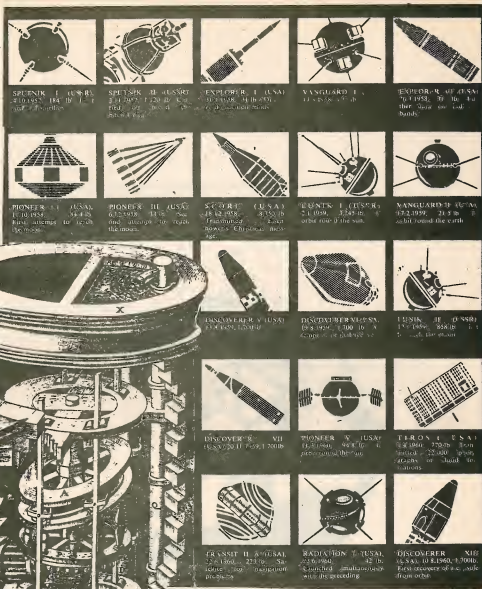




Supposing that inherited cancer could be ejected like  
a gall stone... There had been no misery in the tree of life...

She came to desolate territory. Following a dried stream  
bed, she found herself at the beginning of the Twentieth Century.





Something is wrong with these expensive brains.  
Millions soon die, others are re-invented.  
Technology's the pressure-cooker:  
So all consume and all are discontented.  
Internally, that old Machine remains.





The century of greatest pressure comes to an end. Despite continual carnage, the population is larger, denser, than ever before. Despite all medicine can do, disease multiplies, becomes more baroque, more lethal. Love itself is under threat; compassion has a knife at its throat.

Augustina is by now a legend. She's Augustina the archetype, the anima. Sensing her influence over human minds, she calls it forth. Just for an instant, all humanity responds, is with her. In that moment, the great Black Machine is expelled from its lodgement in human skulls.

It bursts forth in the shape of a great dark globe.

Men and women are free at last. New life, new hope, wells up in them. The future is like a great unwritten book in which





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